

Healthy Aging Communication Network

Living Stronger & Longer



Older Adults and Diabetes

What is the magnitude of the problem?

Diabetes is a disease characterized by high levels of blood sugar, which can be a result of problems with insulin production, insulin action, or both. There are three major types of diabetes; Type 1, Type 2, and gestational diabetes. Based on 2006 estimates, over 16.4 million American adults have been diagnosed with diabetes, or 7.5 percent of the adult population. The rate is higher in Arizona, where 8.5 percent of the adult population has been diagnosed with diabetes. Among persons over 65 years of age, nearly one in five have been diagnosed with diabetes. Although death rates from diabetes among the 65 and over age group have slightly declined in the past 10 years, the death rate is considerably greater than the Healthy Arizona 2010 objective of 45 per 100,000.

What is the cost?

During 2005, there were 2,501 hospitalizations for diabetes as a primary diagnosis among older adults, up from 2,388 in 2004. The average length of stay was six days. The cost of diabetes-related hospitalizations is increasing rapidly. From 1994 to 2004, the average cost upon discharge for diabetes hospitalizations doubled, from over \$13,000 to nearly \$27,000 (Diabetes in Arizona: Status Report, 2005). Hospitalization data are from state hospitals only; federal facilities (Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Services) are not included.

What are the complications?

Diabetes is associated with serious complications and premature death. Diabetes-related complications include heart disease, stroke, vision loss or blindness, kidney disease, high blood pressure, nervous system disease, amputations, and dental disease.

What will decrease the risk of developing diabetes or its complications?

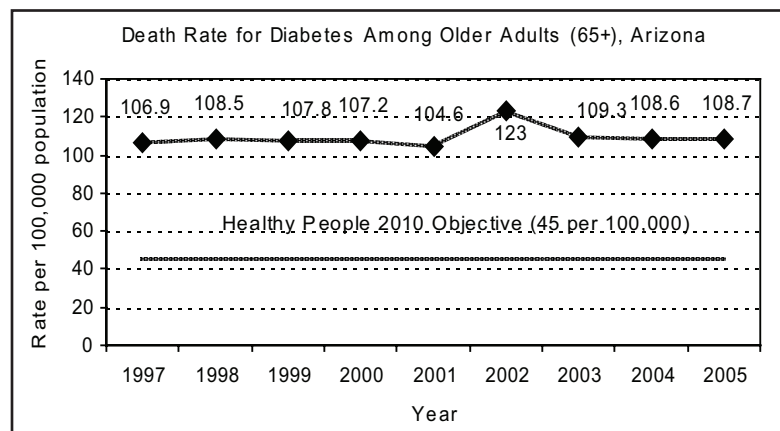
People at risk for diabetes can take steps to prevent its onset. Some risk factors include a family history of diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure,

and high cholesterol. Studies have shown that lifestyle changes can prevent or delay the onset of Type 2 diabetes. The following are suggestions for preventing diabetes:

- Start and maintain a regular exercise program consisting of moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes 3 times a week (minimum)
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Reduce intake of dietary fat
- Eat at least five daily servings of fruits and vegetables
- Smoking cessation
- Control glucose level, blood pressure, and blood lipid level.

Control of diabetes is also essential. People with diabetes can take steps to control the disease and its complications. The following are recommended tests/screenings to reduce the risk of developing complications.

- A1C test at least twice a year
- Dilated eye exam once a year
- Comprehensive foot exam at least once a year
- Lipid profile and micro albumin measurement once a year (if indicated).



Source: Arizona Health Status and Vital Statistics

To learn about Healthy Aging Arizona, please contact Ramona Rusinak at (602) 364-0526 or visit the Healthy Aging Arizona website at <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/healthyagingarizona/index.htm>

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